A

LETTER

FROM

An English Merchant in London,

TO HIS

Dutch Correspondant

IN

AMSTERDAM,

About Publick

AFFAIRS.

With Allowance.

SIR.

I Had yours by the last Pacquet, and thank you heartily for your News and Advice: We have been old Friends, and always very kind, and I would not have the least Controversie with one I have so much reason to Esteem; but the same Friendship leads me to be Plain and Close with you, especially where our *Credit*, our *Countryes*, and what is more, *Truth* it self is concerned.

In Answer to mine, that complains of your *unusual Briskness* to us, you tell me your present Animosity rises from the Fears the News give you, which you daily receive of us, that we are *running headlong into Popery*, and that it will be your turn next, if you don't make a *Diversion*, and that for so good, and so great a Cause, as the Security of the *Protestant Religion*, you have taken Heart, and resolve *to hazard all to support it*.

As a Friend, I'll tell you what's said of our side, to ballance against the plausibility of your Pretensions: We say, If you are in all this Sincere, That you are mistaken, and have your Intelligence from ill Hands; such, who tell their *Fears* for *Facts*, or fear nothing, but that the Government is like to be settled *without* them, and it may be *against* them too, if they will not come into our just Measures; for let them say what they will to you, I assure you, *in the Faith of a Friend*, that the business is, *a fair and equal Liberty of Conscience to all Perswasions*; to be established by the most durable Methods, and such as that one Party shall not have the means of preying upon the other, and less, that the whole should be in hazard from any one Party, and that even the *Church of England's* share in this Security, shall yet bare (*if She please*) *a greater preference*, than her Number could in Justice require.

Such a Liberty (*and such or none*) cannot bring in *Popery*, tho it *preserves* Papists; for their Preservation being fix't by that which secures us, *it puts them upon preserving that which gives us our common Safety*. And tho this may be thought by some a meer Speculation, I dare assure you, its good English, very feasable and requisite, and that which Interest

as well as Native Right teaches, I will not ſay preſſes to.

But now that I have told you, and that upon none of the worſt or meaneſt Authorities neither, what we expect, and we have cauſe to hope the Goodneſs of his Majeſty will in Parliament Confirm to us: I'll tell you what part you have in our Thoughts. That you in *Holland* were never yet found guilty of that *civil Sin* of preferring your Religion to your Intereſt, and that if you will turn over the Treaties you have made with other Governments, and the Methods you have taken to undermine *even your Proteſtant Neighbours* in point of Trade, It will appear a Truth not to be conteſted, that generally ſpeaking, the firſt Article of your Creed is INTEREST; ſo that what we have to do is to examine what *Intereſt* can move you to this ſurly Behaviour; for, ſhifts apart, this is the cloſe, the true and important Queſtion between us at this time. I'll tell you ſtill what our Folks ſay, That you blow up our People by their *Averſion to Popery* againſt the *Liberty* that ſhould ſecure us both againſt That and You; for as a true legal Liberty, upon its own Foundation, is the higheſt and laſt human Security againſt Force on Conſcience, ſo if you can prevent it, and thereby keep up that *Diſturbed* and *Uneven* State of Government among us, that has hinder'd the encreaſe of our Trade, which this Liberty would certainly give us, You will ſtill run away with that unequal ſhare, that has made you, under all your Native and Domeſtick Diſadvantages, equal in Wealth and Power to the firſt rank of Crowned Heads in the World, and that ye are therefore as much *afraid* of the ſucceſs of theſe Meaſures of Liberty of Conſcience in Parliament, as you were once of the Parliament Forces, leaſt they ſhould have fixt themſelves that formidable Common-Wealth they began to look like; which I need not tell you occaſioned the firſt War between us, nor that they were Proteſtant all over: So that while you would diſorder us, by ſuggeſting the *Inſincerity* of the King about the Liberty, his *Sincerity* is the only thing you fear, or ought to fear; and for that reaſon, 'tis the great Thing the King is moſt obliged to maintain: And which is more, we thank you for the Objection; for tho we have no cauſe to doubt ſo good and generous a Prince, yet you have by your Oppoſition faſtned our Point, and engag'd him in Reaſon of State to preſerve the Liberty, for the *ſingle Reaſon* that makes you oppoſe it, TRADE, I mean, upon the *Riſe* or *Fall* of which his own Revenue depends that is the ſupport of the Monarchy.

'Tis natural enough to ask you, that if ſo ſmall a People, in ſo little, and ſo ill a Country, by the *Tranquility* Liberty of Conſcience has brought you, and the *Induſtry* that State of Peace, and Security has *excited*, have been able to make your ſelves Maſters of ſo great a part of the Traffick of the World, what, might we not hope from the ſame meaſure, that have ſuch native advantages upon you, as *Number*, *Scituation*, *and more than a Self-Subſiſtance*: In ſhort, we have liv'd almoſt an Age in a State of War, at home, at leaſt of *Strife*; and as the fleeteſt Horſes may be beaten by *Weight*, ſo 'tis certain nothing elſe has given you the Advantages you have had upon us, and that you are ſo unwilling to loſe, or ſhare amongſt your Neighbours; but when we ride equal, we can never miſs of winning the Match. *Monarchs*, that deal with States by their own meaſures will ever carry their Point, who, to the conveniencies of their own Form of Government, wiſely add thoſe of the Government they have to do with.

We cannot yield your Power to your Republick, perhaps the *worſt* built of the kind; for tho you had a being before Liberty of Conſcience, your Well-being, to be ſure your Greatneſs came by it. Your Countrey in it ſelf ſeems the *Reprobation* of the World; Ordain'd wanting, as it were, for the Tryal of humane Skill; what Art could do after Nature; and how near Man could come to Creation: I own to you an extraordinary Induſtry, but it has been the civil Unity this Liberty has given you, that has made you a Land of ſtately Cities, and fill'd you with Trade, and Treaſure, and all that is excellent of all Countrys; as if you were the great Market, or Exchequer of the whole. In fine, after I tell you, That, Proportion obſerv'd, you exceed us in Traffick, five to one, that have tentimes your Advantages for Trade; Can you think, that this has *no Temptation* in it? or that We ſhall ever be ſo wanting to our ſelves, as not to underſtand, and purſue this Intereſt? 'Tis (alas!) but too long that We have ſuffer'd you to make this Benefit by our Folly; for when this Liberty has taught us to know our own ſtrength *you cannot be longer ignorant of it*; for almoſt all, that we ſhall get by theſe Meaſures, you muſt loſe; and 'tis this you wiſely apprehend, Tho you *Chriſten* your diſlike to our Liberty, under

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the fair Name of the *Proteſtant Religion*; but that will not longer paſs upon us, ſince all the skill you have cannot perſwade us to believe that That ſhould be ill for us, *that is ſo good for you.* I muſt alſo tell you that the Diſſenter, who is your *neareſt Kinſman* in Religion on this ſide the Water, takes it extreamly ill of you, that you oppoſe the Eaſe his preſſing Circumſtances require: That after ſo long, and furious a Perſecution upon Him, and his Family, you ſhould fall in with his Oppreſſors; and inſtead of ſecuring him from the future Power of his Enemies, Quarrel the poor Man for not truſting himſelf upon his Adverſaries Promiſes, tho by doing it, he hazards more than his preſent Liberty, and is uncertain of any Performance at laſt: for he cannot conceive how or when his Perſecutors were converted; and if they be, tho the *Synod of Dort* held *no falling from Grace*, yet thoſe Gentlemen you ſide with here, aſſert the contrary Opinion; And againſt that *Slip* it is the *Poor Man* deſires to be ſecur'd: For he argues thus, and I confeſs I don't preſently ſee what reaſonable anſwer can be made him.

He ſays, The beſt of the ſecurity promis'd him is, *That he ſhall not be Perſecuted hereafter.* But then ſays he, who ſhall ſecure me to that Time; for if I periſh for that hope, or my hazard of all now out-weighs the value of the enjoyment of after time, admitting their truth that promiſe me, ought I to cloſe with ſuch a bargain? Beſides, ſuppoſe I could *ſhift* through the contempt of this preſent Grace, (an odd ſuppoſal, when 'tis imagin'd I cannot *long out-live* the acceptance of the very Liberty, it has ſuch an Army in the Belly of it) what have I at laſt beſides the priviledge of living at my own Charge, and that but as long as my old Enemies pleaſe; for if I have *no ſhare* in the Power that ſhould ſecure my Liberty, they that have it may take it away when they will: And for that purpoſe the pretence of the Glory of God, the Safety of the Government, and I know not what elſe ſhall not be wanting to deprive me. Upon the whole matter, I find my ſelf as unſafe then, for tho it is ſuppoſed the Papiſt muſt break his word, (for all it is, at this time, his confeſt Civil and Religious Intereſt to keep it) I muſt ſuppoſe too that the Church of *England-Man* may do it; and if he does, I am abſolutely in his Power; for I am not of the Government, & no *Freehold*, no *Brains*, no *Honeſty*, no any thing *can* prefer me, nor, in this Caſe ſecure me. Now that very *Expedient* that will keep Liberty *upright* againſt what may be attempted by the Zeal, or Ambition of the Church of *England-Man* in Power, will keep the Liberty *ſtreight* againſt the Bigottry of the Roman *Catholick* in the Government. In ſhort, I am one that believes there is a God, that he governs the World, that leſs things than this great *Eaſe* and Tranquility do not come by Trick, or Chance: I'll truſt him to keep it that gave it, I'll honour the King for it, I'll love my Neighbour, forgive my Enemies, and commit my ſelf, in well-doing, to him that is able to ſave me, who turns the Hearts of Kings as Waters, and does whatever he pleaſes.

Thus the *poor Priſoner* argues now he's got home to his own fire ſide, and I leave you to anſwer him, for I profeſs I cannot.

I had forgot one thing, with which I ſhall conclude this Letter, already too long upon any ſcore but that of friendſhip, and in a matter of this Importance, 'tis this. The Diſſenter is extreamly fearful, leſt this change of yours from him to the Church-Man, ariſes from a worldly Principle, and not a miſtake; for tho purſuing *that* may be a great one, as to the other World, yet ever knowing your skill in chuſing, and ſincerity in following the methods that get moſt of this, he is apprehenſive leſt *that* paſſion prevail with you to Sacrifice him to his Enemies. Now his motives to this thought are, Firſt, That he no ſooner ſeem'd in one Intereſt with the Government here, than you declin'd him, and *ſtruck up a Friendſhip* with his old Perſecutors, and your Enemies, becauſe they ſeemed to take turns with him againſt the Government. But for this he ſays, That truly the Government came to him, He did not go to it, and tho this be leſs meritorious on his part towards the Government, it ought at leaſt to vindicate him with you, And he adds, That he could never juſtifie himſelf with God or men, to be againſt the Government when 'tis againſt him, and againſt it *when it is for him too*, and therefore that it is Injuſtice to ſtile him a *Temporizer* for complying with the Government upon his *own Principle*, or being of the ſame mind he ever was, becauſe the Government is pleas'd to be of *that mind alſo.*

His Second motive to think you deliberately chang'd, is. That the Church of *England*-man, your new Friend, is a man of pleaſure, a *Gentleman*, more adicted to a Court, then an Exchange, But he is a *Trades-man*, a *Merchant*, one

one that is like to meet you at your Market with as good a Price, as Fair Dealing, and better goods to ingage Customers, and therefore the less liberty he has at home, the better it will be for you abroad: I say, the Dissenters consisting of the *Sober*, and *Trading* Body of the Kingdom, and consequently most likely to improve this Liberty to your disadvantage in point of Trade, he fears you oppose his happiness, for your *own Gain*, and decline him, and disgrace the Liberty that you may keep the advantage to your selves, that you have gotten by it; which if he should happen to guess right, shews the Liberty not to be an effect of Vertue, but Interest, and therefore all you say against him, and his Liberty, is to be suspected. And the Truth is, when you give it at home so frankly, even where Papists, in proportion to ours, are *Fifty to One*, and many of them eminently imploy'd by you too, and that latitude maintained by no obscure person amongst you for just, and prudent, it shews in earnest, you know what is good for your selves, and that you are selfish enough, to keep the rest of the World in ignorance of that Vertue. But for your comfort, I will tell you, we begin to find, that we are an *Island*, plac'd to *give*, and not to receive the Laws of Trade; that we have *brave Ports*, a *fruitful Soyl*, *excellent Growths*, an *industrious* and *valiant People*, capable of the *highest Acquisitions*, and a *Prince*, that to his *lasting Glory*, has promis'd to *Head* & *Cherish* the Inclinations of his Virtuous, and Industrious Subjects of *all Perswasions*; a Method that cannot fail to *cure* the Jealousies of his mistakens People, and *disappoint* the devices of his unreasonable Enemies. I shall say no more now, perhaps you'l think this too much, but whatever you think, I am sure you know I am no *Papist*, and that I am very much, and very truely

Yours &c. G. M.

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